

Agenda Item: 4
Meeting Date: February 22, 2007

Environmental Water Account (EWA) Review Panel

Summary: In collaboration with EWA Implementing agencies and involved stakeholders, the CALFED Science Program organized an independent review of the EWA Program in 2006 (the fifth review conducted since the program's inception in 2000). Staff will provide an overview of the review panel's conclusions and recommendations, and the process that the Science Program and EWA agencies will use to jointly respond to the panel.

Action: This is an informational item in preparation for the ISB's upcoming role in evaluating and commenting on the EWA Panel review and agency response.

Background: The Environmental Water Account (EWA) Program is a key component of the CALFED Program's Water Management Strategy. It was created in 2000 to address two problems - declining fish populations and unreliable water supplies. Its purpose is to protect fish by making it possible to modify water project operations to reduce entrainment at no uncompensated water cost to CVP/SWP water users. The EWA Program is also part of the CALFED policy of adaptive management; ongoing discussions and periodic scientific review are a critical part of the process to help guide management decisions.

To meet these goals, the CALFED Science Program has been tasked with providing scientific review of EWA to assess how much water was acquired, how it was used, and whether it had a beneficial effect. Previous reviews addressed primarily program implementation—how was acquired water used for target species. As the program moves into its last year of funding and implementation, however, the 2006 Review also addressed the key question of biological effectiveness. Specific elements of the review included the contribution of the EWA and other environmental water programs to protecting and restoring Delta smelt, Chinook salmon, and steelhead in the San Francisco estuary and watershed, developing plans for science needs and water allocation priorities for EWA Year 7, and identifying science components and water allocation strategies for a possible future environmental water program. The Review Panel also reviewed the Resources Agency Action Matrix: a proposed set of actions for modified water project operations intended to improve conditions for pelagic organisms, including delta smelt.

The review was held in the CALFED Bay Delta Program offices in Sacramento, November 28-30, 2006. For more information on EWA and the review, see the EWA Workshops webpage: <http://science.calwater.ca.gov/workshop/ewa.shtml>. Science Program staff will provide the ISB an overview of the EWA review in preparation for the ISB's future role (June 2007) in evaluating and commenting on the EWA Panel review and agency response.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Review of the 2006 Environmental Water Account (EWA)

Attachment 2 – Review of Resources Agency Action Matrix for 2007

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